

Murphy Calls on President to Alleviate High Gas Prices, Act on Energy Independence Proposals

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MERIDEN, CT - Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) called on President Bush to recognize that high gas prices are hurting middle class families and to act to provide relief for Connecticut families by suspending input into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).

"It's time for the President to finally stand up to his oil company buddies. Our economy is struggling, and families, seniors, businesses, and local governments are being asked to bear the burden of skyrocketing fuel costs. The President has tools at his disposal to alleviate this problem, and so today, I am demanding that he end his obstinacy and act," said Murphy.

Murphy was joined at a press conference at Tom's Service Station in Meriden by George McGoldrick, Deputy Majority Leader of the Meriden Town Council, and John Garlock, Owner and President of Central Connecticut Transportation in Meriden. Mr. Garlock's trucking company has been hit with a 60% increase in their monthly fuel costs.

"It's obvious that fuel prices are hurting our business. We are a small business and with high fuel costs, we can't hire right now. Until prices come down, we can't get back to doing business as we normally do," said Mr. Garlock.

In a letter to President Bush, Murphy asked him to suspend the addition of 12.3 million barrels of oil planned to be added to the SPR in the next six months. According to energy industry analysts, suspending increases in the SPR would increase the amount of oil on the market, driving down gas prices for consumers by as much as \$.25 a gallon. And the Congressional Budget Office found that for every \$10 reduction in the price of a barrel of oil, there is a \$50 billion

simulative effect on the economy.

Suspending input into the SPR is not an unprecedented action. In fact, the SPR is at the same level today as it was in 2005, when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the Gulf Coast, and skyrocketing costs led the Bush Administration to prudently temporarily suspend increasing the SPR to relieve costs and increase supply. Right now, the SPR is 95 percent full with 695 million gallons in reserve.

"Current economic crises and rising energy costs necessitate that the President again act to provide relief and economic stability," said Murphy.

Murphy also demanded that President Bush change his mind and support energy efficiency and conservation measures that the House of Representatives has already passed.

- Stopping Gasoline Price Gouging. The House has passed, and Murphy has cosponsored, H.R. 1252, the Price Gouging Prevention Act, which sets criminal penalties for price gouging of gasoline, and permits states to bring lawsuits against wholesalers or retailers who engage in such practices. This bill was supported by dozens of Republicans, but the President has threatened to veto it.
- Preventing OPEC Price Fixing. The House has passed, and Murphy has cosponsored, H.R. 2264, the No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels Act (NOPEC), which authorizes the Justice Department to take legal action against OPEC state-controlled entities that participate in conspiracies to limit the supply, or fix the price, of oil. OPEC accounts for more than two-thirds of global oil production, and about 65 percent of the oil traded internationally. Despite the fact that this bill passed the House with broad, bipartisan support, the President has threatened to veto it.
- Supporting Renewable Energy Standards. While the President finally acquiesced and signed a version of HR. 6, the Energy Independence and Security Act, he torpedoed one important provision in the bill - the measure to require that 15% of our electricity to come from renewable sources.

"For the long term health of our economy, we've got to convince this President to go further on energy conservation and efficiency. It's the only way we are going to become truly energy independent," said Murphy.

